

## In Memoriam

*Jack A. Roth, MD, FACS, and Kay Hermes, BS*

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Dr. Clifton Fletcher Mountain died in Los Angeles on April 19, 2007 after a prolonged illness. Dr. Mountain was a leader in lung cancer staging and one of the founders of the International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC).

Dr. Mountain was born in Toledo, Ohio on April 15, 1924. He received his undergraduate degree from Harvard College and attended Harvard University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. He received his MD degree from Boston University School of Medicine and completed postgraduate training at the University of Chicago and the University of Texas–MD Anderson Cancer Center. He was a First Lieutenant and damage control officer in the submarine and destroyer escort service in the United States Navy. He received six decorations for exemplary service in WWII in the Pacific theater of operations. Dr. Mountain began his professional career as executive assistant to the vice president and dean of Boston University. He subsequently was chairman of the office of statistical research, director of the computer center at Boston University, and research consultant to the Department of Public Health, Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

In 1961 he moved to Houston. His appointments included professor of surgery at the University of Texas School of Medicine at Houston and professor of surgery at the University of Texas–MD Anderson Cancer Center. He was head of the thoracic oncology program and chairman of the department of thoracic surgery during this time. Dr. Mountain also was senior consultant for the Houston Thorax Institute and consultant for the Texas Heart Institute. In 1964, Dr. Mountain and Dr. David Carr, a medical oncologist at the Mayo Clinic, realized the importance of a staging system for lung cancer; no such system existed at that time. They also realized that previously published classification schemes specifically for lung cancer were found wanting, and none had received wide acceptance. Together, Dr. Mountain and Dr. Carr developed the first TNM staging system for lung cancer, supported by a large database of clinical material. This work was undertaken under the auspices of the Task Force on Lung Cancer of the American Joint Committee on Cancer Staging and End Results Reporting (AJCC) and was subsequently adopted by the AJCC.

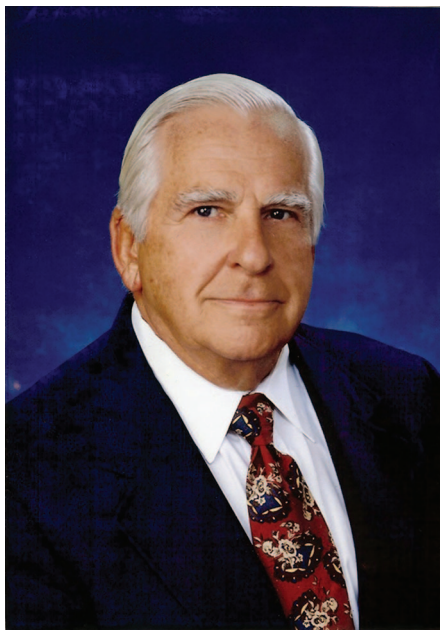
Dr. Mountain continued to refine this system throughout the rest of his career, and his staging system became the standard worldwide in any discussion of lung cancer. Recognizing the need to coordinate international efforts in lung cancer research, Dr. Mountain was one of the founders of the IASLC in 1973. He was elected the third president of IASLC in 1977, and he organized the First International Congress in

1978 in Hilton Head, South Carolina. He remained active in IASLC throughout his career, and he received the President's Award (1994) and the Distinguished Achievement Award (1991) for his service and contributions to IASLC.

During his long career of more than 35 years at the MD Anderson Cancer Center and afterwards at UCSD, Dr. Mountain was a popular lecturer and consultant in nations throughout the world. He brought his statistical expertise to his chosen field of medicine when he served as chairman and project director of the program in biomathematics at the University of Texas Graduate School of Biomedical Sciences in Houston. He carried the message of the multidisciplinary care for lung cancer developed at MD Anderson to physicians and researchers at all levels of endeavor—from sophisticated specialized teaching institutions to community cancer clinics.

Pursuing his interest in diagnosis and surgical instrumentation, Dr. Mountain introduced surgical stapling devices to the southwestern United States, promoting the use of instruments given to him while he visited the Soviet Union as a delegate under President Richard Nixon's detente program. He also introduced the technique of mediastinoscopy in the Southwest, based on the work of Eric Carls in Sweden. On the basis of his observations, when he served as a delegate on the U.S. Scientific Mission to Japan, Dr. Mountain took notice of that nation's work in the application of photobiology and use of laser technology. He pursued early experimental work in the use of autofluorescence in the diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer. In 1979, Dr. Mountain's idea to establish a multidisciplinary clinic that brought together treatment and patient care specialists to more efficiently battle the growing problem of lung cancer became the institution's first thoracic oncology program. Throughout his career, Dr. Mountain dedicated a major research effort to developing staging classifications for lung cancer, supported by carefully collected data. From this work, he promoted accurate, reproducible staging as a baseline for clinical research projects. This work produced international agreement on standardized definitions for anatomic factors vital to treatment selection, end-result reporting, and communication of knowledge about lung cancer.

After his retirement from the MD Anderson Cancer Center in 1996, Dr. Mountain continued his lifelong commitment to excellence in the diagnosis and treatment of patients with thoracic cancer while he served as clinical professor of surgery in the division of cardiothoracic surgery at the University of California at San Diego. He and his wife, Merel, enjoyed living in La Jolla and sailing in the Pacific aboard their sloop, *Volare*. He was a valued lecturer at grand rounds at the Scripps Clinic and Research Foundation, the Postgrad-



CLIFTON FLETCHER MOUNTAIN, MD 1924–2007

uate Assembly in Surgery, Hoag Memorial Hospital, and Scripps Memorial Hospital, among others. Dr. Mountain continued to participate in international scientific conferences in Canada, England, South America, Greece, Italy, Ireland, and Japan throughout the remainder of his life.

Dr. Mountain established the Clifton F. Mountain Foundation for Research and Education in Lung Cancer, and from this resource he promoted a staging classification of lung cancer and its applications for treatment selection and evaluation of results of treatment approaches and programs. Along with colleagues, he published the illustrative staging manual, *A Handbook for Staging, Imaging and Lymph Node Classification in Lung Cancer*, which was distributed worldwide by Bristol-Meyers Squibb, and which was published online as a teaching vehicle for residents in thoracic surgery at the Johns Hopkins Medical School. His collected works from 1951 to 2004 were published by the foundation in 2007.

Dr. Mountain gave freely of his time to participate in numerous scientific and administrative committees of national and international organizations. He received many awards, including the Rudolph Nissen Medal for "Contributions to Thoracic Surgery and Service Rendered to the Cause of Science: German Society for Thoracic and Cardiovascular Surgery" (1998); the Distinguished Alumnus Award, Boston University School of Medicine (1992); the Distinguished Service Award, The University of Texas–MD Anderson Cancer Center at Houston (1990), the Medal of the National Cancer Institute of Japan (1985); the Enrique M. Garcia Memorial Medal from the Philippine College of Surgeons (1982); the title of Honorary Director, Chilean Society for Diseases of the Thorax (1982); and the Award of the Soviet Academy of Science (1977).

In the United States and in many countries throughout the world, Dr. Mountain was a visiting professor and lecturer, and he participated in local, national, and international scientific meetings and congresses. He gave over 450 scientific presentations, with appointments as visiting professor and honored guest lecturer on over 145 occasions, including 117 lectureships in 22 foreign countries and in 28 educational institutions in the United States. A dedication to professional and lay education is reflected in his publications, which include 73 chapters in books and 158 articles in scientific journals, some still in press. Dr. Mountain also served on the editorial boards of a number of U. S. and foreign journals.

Many friends will remember Dr. Mountain's often quoted words: "Medicine is like sailing... part art and part science. When man first gained an understanding of sails and harnessed the power of the wind, he extended the limits of travel and measurably increased his capacity for collecting knowledge. In so doing he learned more about the very power that was moving him." Dr. Mountain is survived by his wife Merel, three children, three stepchildren, and four grandchildren. The Clifton F. Mountain Foundation continues his work. He will be missed greatly and remembered for his remarkable, unique, and invaluable contributions to oncology and surgery.

I would like to thank Mrs. Merel Mountain and Dr. David Carr for their contributions.